



STREP THROAT (Group A Beta Strep, *Streptococcus*)

What is strep throat?

Viruses are the most common cause of a sore throat. However, bacteria called *Streptococcus* (group A Strep) can cause an infection in the throat and tonsils, known as strep throat. This can happen at any age, but most frequently occurs among children between the ages of 5 to 15, and adults who are parents of school-age children or have close contact with children.

What are the symptoms?

Symptoms of strep throat may include sore throat, painful swallowing, headache, fever, stomachache, nausea, vomiting, tiny red spots on the roof of the mouth, swollen and tender neck glands, and red and swollen tonsils that sometimes have white patches or streaks of pus, tiny red spots on the roof of the mouth, stomachache, nausea or vomiting, and swollen and tender neck glands. Some people with strep throat, particularly children, may also develop a rash known as scarlet fever while others may have no symptoms at all.

How is strep throat diagnosed?

A health care provider will ask about symptoms and will test you by swabbing the back of your throat for a rapid strep test or throat culture. The rapid test quickly shows if group A strep is causing the illness. While the throat culture takes more time than the rapid test, it sometimes finds infections that the rapid test misses.

What is the treatment for strep throat?

Strep throat is treated with antibiotics. Patients must finish their entire antibiotic prescription even though they will feel better before the infection is gone. This prevents complications or recurring infection. Infected persons should stay home from work, school, or daycare until at least 12 hours after starting their antibiotic and no longer have a fever.

Are there any complications?

Complications can occur after a strep throat infection, though they are not common. This can happen if the bacteria spread to other parts of the body. The complications include abscesses (pockets of pus) around the tonsils or in the neck, swollen lymph nodes in the neck, sinus infections, ear infections, rheumatic fever (a heart disease), and post-streptococcal glomerulonephritis (a kidney disease).



Frequently Asked Questions

How is strep throat spread?

People who are infected spread the bacteria by talking, coughing, sneezing, touching or drinking with contaminated items, and touching the mouth or nose, or a sore on their skin. It usually takes two to five days for someone exposed to group A strep to become ill with strep throat.

How do I prevent strep throat?

Help keep others from becoming ill by taking the antibiotics as directed. Do not return to work, school, or daycare until the antibiotics have been taken for at least 12 hours and you do not have a fever. Do not share food or drinks. Persons with strep should cover their nose and mouth when sneezing or coughing. Practice good hygiene with hand washing for at least 20 seconds, especially after sneezing or coughing.

Resources

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

<https://www.cdc.gov/groupastrep/diseases-public/strep-throat.html>

<https://www.cdc.gov/groupastrep/diseases-public/scarlet-fever.html>